

Humanities 3362-001

Philosophy of Mind

FALL 2020

Instructor: Daniel Skibra

Time and Location: Monday; 6:30 - 9:30 PM, online (we meet 6:30 - 8:00 PM)

Contact: email: dskibra@saic.edu

Office Hours: Mondays; 12:00 – 1:00 PM

Course Description

This course is a philosophical investigation into the nature of thought and consciousness. What is it to have a mind? How does your mind relate to your brain or your body? Is your mind really nothing more than a product of electrical impulses in your brain, or is it something more than and distinct from any physical phenomenon? Or is the very idea that there are such things as thoughts a sort of illusion? Can computers think? Could minds continue to exist after death, or could your mind be transferred into a computer? If so, what would make that mind your mind, rather than a brand new mind? What is it to be conscious of one's experiences? Is there any way to explain the phenomenon of consciousness, or is it fundamentally mysterious? We will consider and evaluate answers to these questions by reading the work of both historical and contemporary philosophers.

Course Objectives

Students will:

- learn to understand philosophical arguments
- develop their own informed views on the topics of study
- present the arguments of the philosophers and theorists as well their own views in clear prose
- subject both the views studied as well as their own to critical scrutiny.

Course Requirements

Assignments

Mid Term Exam	40 points
Final Exam	40 points
Reading Responses (10) + discussion	40 points
Paper 1 (approx. 4 pages)	30 points
Paper 2 (approx. 4 - 5 pages)	30 points
Presentation (with partner(s))	10 points
total possible	= 200 points

You need at least a 70% to earn credit for this course.

There are no extra credit opportunities associated with this course. All assignments for course credit are required as stated in this syllabus, and students should fully utilize all these assignments in order to successfully complete the course. Students requesting individual extra credit opportunities will be referred back to their copy of the syllabus and this course policy.

Notes on assignments

Resources for writing a philosophy paper:

- <http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>
- <http://www.public.asu.edu/~dportmor/tips.pdf>
- https://prezi.com/z4h1_fwilbxj/a-sample-philosophy-paper/

Course Policies

What to Expect

Here is what a typical week would look like when you are taking this class. This class will be hybrid, meaning it will be a combination of synchronous and asynchronous components. Once a week, during our scheduled class time, we will meet online via teleconference for live discussions and activities for an hour and a half. The remaining work for the week will be asynchronous. You will access and complete it at your own pace (respecting schedules and deadlines, of course). All of the lectures will be pre-recorded and uploaded to Canvas ahead of time.

The course material will all be accessible on Canvas. The course material will be organized by week, so simply navigate to the appropriate week, where all you have to do for the week is laid out in the weekly module. Each module will contain a breakdown of the week's work, reproducing the information on the syllabus, but with more detail and instructions. You can expect having to watch about 45 minutes to an hour of such lectures every week, in conjunction with the week's reading assignment, in preparation for the discussion. A

typically week will include readings (pdfs of readings not from the Mandik or Schneider books will be available on Canvas), videos of lectures, and links to any assignments for the week.

To do well in this course, you have to be committed to putting the work in every week. I aim to make it a manageable amount, but if you let it slide for a week or two, you run the real risk of falling behind. If you encounter any trouble in the course (with the material, with assignments, or with the technology), send me an email. I am happy to help, discuss, and meet with you (virtually) as necessary.

Attendance

In face-to-face classes, I take attendance. Since we are not meeting in a classroom, I obviously won't be passing around a sign-in sheet. Nonetheless, your attendance is required in this course. There are two ways that I will manage attendance for the course. First of all, I will take attendance during our live meetings. You are required to be in attendance for those. Second, I will monitor that you are indeed watching the lectures. (The application that hosts the videos on Canvas, Panopto, allows me to track viewership, and I will be monitoring this.)

If you miss more than three live Zoom meetings over the course of the term, your final grade will drop by 5 points, and another 5 points for each additional missed Zoom meeting. If you expect to miss a Zoom meeting, but have a valid excuse for this which you can provide documentation of (doctor's note, etc.), I will excuse the absence.

For the lectures, if your viewership drops below 75% (so, you watch less than 75% of the lectures), your final grade will drop by 5 points. For every additional 5% below that benchmark, your final grade will drop another 5 points. Since you can watch the lectures at your own leisure, the only way you can be excused from this is if you become really sick at some point, and can provide a doctor's note.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

SAIC is committed to full compliance with all laws regarding equal opportunities for students with disabilities. Students with known or suspected disabilities, such as a Reading/Writing Disorder, ADD/ADHD, and/or a mental health condition who think they would benefit from assistance or accommodations should first contact the Disability and Learning Resource Center (DLRC) to schedule an appointment. DLRC staff will review your disability documentation and work with you to determine reasonable accommodations. They will then provide you with a letter outlining the approved accommodations for you to deliver to your instructors. This letter must be presented before any accommodations will be implemented. You should contact the DLRC as early in the semester as possible. The DLRC is located within the Wellness Center on the 13th floor of 116 S Michigan Ave. and can be reached via phone at 312.499.4278 or email at dlrc@saic.edu.

Writing Center Resources

Writing Center

Lakeview Building, 116 S. Michigan Ave., 10th Floor

writingcenter@saic.edu

312.499.4138

<http://www.saic.edu/academics/academicresources/writingcenter/>

Appointments

Schedule in advance: <https://www.supersaas.com/schedule/saic/WritingCenter>

Short-notice: Call 312.499.4138 to see if there are any openings

Hours

Monday - Thursday: 9:00 AM - 7:15 PM

Friday: 9:00 AM - 5:15 PM

Walk-in hours: Monday - Thursday: 4:15 - 7:15 PM

Auditing (Non-Credit Enrollment) Policy

All students participating in this course must be enrolled as credit-seeking students. Given the nature of the course, requests to enroll in the course as a non-credit (audit) student will not be approved. Participation in class activities by non-enrolled students is prohibited without advance, specific consent from the instructor.

Email/ Communication

The best way to reach me outside class is via email. However, give me 24 hours to respond during the week. If you email me after 5pm on Friday, don't expect a response until Monday morning. Most of the time, I will be able to respond to you sooner than this. When there is a paper due, get all of your questions to be 48 hours before the due date.

I will answer *simple, specific* questions over email pertaining to the course material or the logistics of the course. I can also address simple interpretive questions you have with the material, or arguments you are trying out for your papers. To address anything more involved, you'll need to meet with me in (virtual) office hours. (I highly encourage you to take advantage of office hours in any event.)

Participation

In our discussions, you will be expected to attend class having done the readings and thought about them enough to discuss the arguments they make, to ask informed questions about them, and to engage with the other members of the class on these matters. Two expectations in service of these aims are worth making explicit. First, you'll need to be well-prepared, having read and thought about the assigned readings before class. Secondly, we will all need to foster a respectful, open environment where we can clarify, interpret and critically engage the philosophical issues dealt with in readings. Maintaining a respectful classroom atmosphere is crucial, and part of your responsibility.

Academic Misconduct

From the SAIC Student Handbook: “Academic misconduct includes both plagiarism and cheating, and may consist of: the submission of the work of another as one’s own; unauthorized assistance on a test or assignment; submission of the same work for more than one class without the knowledge and consent of all instructors; or the failure to properly cite texts or ideas from other sources. Academic misconduct extends to all spaces on campus, including satellite locations and online education. Academic integrity is expected in all coursework, including online learning. It is assumed that the person receiving the credit for the course is the person completing the work. SAIC has processes in place that protect student privacy and uses LDAP authentication to verify student identity.”

Specific procedures for faculty to follow in the case of academic misconduct are detailed in the Student Handbook.

Additional resources for students:

- Read “Plagiarism: How to Recognize It and Avoid It” - a short guide prepared by the Faculty Senate Student Life Subcommittee in 2004.
- Read the Flaxman Library’s quick guide titled “AVOID PLAGIARISM.”

Required Texts

There is one required book for this course:

- Pete Mandik - *This is Philosophy of Mind*, Wiley-Blackwell, 2014 (ISBN: 978-0-470-67450-5)
- Susan Schneider - *Artificial You: AI and the Future of Your Mind*, Princeton University Press, 2019 (ISBN: 978-0-691-18014-4)

All other readings will be posted on the course’s Canvas site as pdf files.

Course Outline

Week 1: September 2 COURSE INTRODUCTION

- We don’t meet this week (the term starts on a Wed), but read the following, and watch the introduction videos
- **Readings:** Mandik - Chapter 1: *Meet Your Mind*
- ALSO: Read over this (online):
<http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/reading.html>

Week 2: September 7 ARE THE MIND AND BRAIN DIFFERENT THINGS?

- **Labor Day:** no class meeting (again), but read the following and watch the associated lectures
- **Readings:** Descartes - excerpts from *Meditations on First Philosophy*
Elizabeth of Bohemia - correspondence with Descartes
Mandik - Chapter 2: *Substance Dualism*

Week 3: September 14 IS “THE MIND” OUR BEHAVIOR?

- Monday class discussion on substance dualism
- **Readings:** Ryle - *Descartes’ Myth* (from *the Concept of Mind*)
Hempel - *the Logical Analysis of Psychology*
Mandik - Chapter 5: *Behaviorism and Other Minds*

Week 4: September 21 ARE THE MIND AND THE BRAIN THE SAME THING?

- Monday class discussion on behaviorism
- **Readings:** Smart - *Sensations and Brain Processes*
Mandik - Chapter 6: *Mind as Brain*

Week 5: September 28 ARE MINDS A KIND OF COMPUTER?

- Monday class discussion on the identity theory
- **Readings:** Turing - *Computing Machinery and Intelligence*
Mandik - Chapter 7: *Thinking Machines*

Week 6: October 5 MORE ON MINDS AND COMPUTERS

- Monday class discussion on functionalism
- **Readings:** Putnam - *the Nature of Mental States*
Mandik - Chapter 8: *Functionalism* Schneider - *Introduction*

Week 7: October 12

- Mid-term exam due this week
- Watch movie during class time (somehow)
Suggestions: *Ex-Machina* or *Her*
- **Readings:** no new readings this week

Week 8: October 19 RESISTANCE TO THE IDEA OF THE MIND AS A COMPUTER

- Monday class discussion on functionalism and the movie
- **Readings:** Searle - *Minds Brains and Programs*
Block - *Troubles With Functionalism* (read only section 1.2: *Homunculi-Headed Robots* (277 - 285))
Schneider - Chapter 1: *the Age of A.I.*

Week 9: October 26 HOW COMMON ARE MINDS?

- Monday class discussion on challenges to functionalism
- **Readings:** Berkeley - *First Dialogue* from *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous*
Nagel - *Panpsychism*
Mandik - Chapter 4: *Idealism, Solipsism, and Panpsychism*

Week 10: November 2 WHAT IS CONSCIOUSNESS?

- Monday class discussion on panpsychism and idealism
- **Readings:** Chalmers - *Facing Up to the Problem of Consciousness*
Mandik - Chapter 14: *Consciousness and Qualia*
Schneider - Chapter 2: *the Problem of A.I. Consciousness*

Week 11: November 9 IS YOUR MIND A PHYSICAL THING?

- Monday class discussion on consciousness
- **Readings:** Jackson - *Epiphenomenal Qualia*
Mandik - Chapter 4: *Property Dualism*
Schneider - Chapters 3 and 4: *Consciousness Engineering* and *How to Catch an AI Zombie*

Week 12: November 16 WHAT ARE YOU?

- Monday class discussion on the knowledge argument and epiphenomenalism
- **Readings:** Locke - *Of Identity and Diversity* (from *An Essay Concerning Human Knowledge*)
Sider - *Personal Identity*
Mandik - Chapter 15: *Is this the End? Personal Identity, the Self, and Life After Death*

Week 13: November 23 MACHINE CONSCIOUSNESS

- Monday class discussion on personal identity
- **Thursday, Nov. 26 is Thanksgiving**
- **Readings:** Kurzweil - *the Singularity is Near*
Basl - *the Ethics of Creating Artificial Consciousness*

Week 14: November 30: COULD YOU BE TRANSHUMAN?

- Monday class discussion on the singularity and machine consciousness
- **Readings:** Schneider - Chapters 5 and 6: *Could You Merge With AI?* and *Getting a Mindscan*

Week 15: December 7 ARE YOU SOFTWARE?

- Monday class discussion on the feasibility of transhumanism
- **Readings:** Schneider - Chapters 7 and 8: *A Universe of Singularities* and *Is Your Mind a Software Program?*

Week 16: December 14

- Monday class discussion on alien minds and non-biological intelligent life
- **Readings:** no new reading; Crit Week starts Tuesday

Week 17: December 21 WRAPPING UP

- Final Monday class discussion
- **Readings:** no new reading
- Final exam due this week